



Miami Art Museum

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**American Master James Rosenquist Premieres New Work at MAM**

**James Rosenquist**  
**March 3 – July 2, 2006**

American master James Rosenquist brings his unique brand of imagery to the Miami Art Museum's New Work Gallery for his first U.S. museum exhibition since his forty-year retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2003. The exhibition, curated by MAM Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator Lorie Mertes will be on view from March 3 to July 2.

Two of the seven large-scale works on exhibit, *Brazil* and *The Xenophobic Movie Director or Our Foreign Policy*, are being shown for the first time in the United States. Both are stunning examples of Rosenquist's signature style of massive scale paintings, derived from his early experience as a commercial billboard painter.

"Since the late 1950s, James Rosenquist has been creating an exceptional and consistently intriguing body of work," Mertes said. "As a leader in the American Pop art movement in the 1960s, he drew on the iconography of advertising and the mass media to conjure a sense of contemporary life and the political tenor of the times. Throughout his forty-year career, Rosenquist has demonstrated a command of texture, color, line and shape that dazzles audiences and influences younger generations of artists."

Rosenquist was the first artist to have an exhibition at MAM when it was the Center for Fine Arts. In 1983 he presented his 46-foot long painting *Star Thief* in CFA's auditorium as the center's first major event before its official opening day.

Rosenquist's unique painting style, done without the aid of computers, smoothly transitions from the hyper-real to the highly abstract. Fragmented imagery, fluctuations in scale, and shifts in spatial relationships, combine to create dynamic compositions that become exercises in perception, challenging the eye to take it all in.

The exhibition at MAM, which includes paintings from 1987 to 2004, encompasses prevalent themes in Rosenquist's body of work. It includes works that explore social, political and economic issues from a global perspective as well as works that express the artist's ongoing fascination with space, technology and scientific theory.

Among Rosenquist's works which comment on current events is *Early Catapult* (1992), a painting which was inspired by a trip he took to post-Cold War Berlin. Resting precariously atop a small circular canvas wrapped in chrome-plated barbed wire is a much larger, flame-filled painting. The paintings are juxtaposed with a piece of upholstered furniture, suggesting a relationship between domestic life and the historical sphere of human action, evoking the terrifying past of Nazi Germany and offering a warning on historical amnesia.

Rosenquist's interest in themes of political and cultural transformation dates from 1965, when his *F-111*, an 86-foot multi-paneled painting named for a bomber plane launched Rosenquist to international acclaim. Recognized as a modern-day history painting, it was considered an anti-war statement approaching the significance and power of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937).

Paintings from Rosenquist's *Speed of Light* series, also on view in the exhibition, articulate the artist's perspective on experience and the passage of time. Abstract, colorful and dynamic, the *Speed of Light* series takes its name from Einstein's theory of relativity and the speed of light—in which one spectator sees an event differently from another spectator who is traveling at the speed of light. According to Rosenquist, "Underneath it all is all my experience. ...The paintings are about my imagination as to a new view, or a new look at the speed of light. And they also have to do with the whole history of my experience put into a painting."

The exhibition is organized by the Miami Art Museum, Founding Director Suzanne Delehanty, and curated by Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator Lorie Mertes as part of New Work, a series of projects by leading contemporary artists.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1933 in Grand Forks, North Dakota, James Rosenquist studied art at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts as a teenager and at the University of Minnesota between 1952 and 1954, painting billboards during the summers. In 1955 he moved to New York to study at the Art Students League. He left the school after one year, and in 1957 returned to life as a commercial artist, painting billboards in Times Square and across the city. By 1960, he had quit painting billboards and rented a small studio space in Manhattan where his neighbors included artists Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, and Jack Youngerman. During this period, Rosenquist worked against the prevailing tide of Abstract Expressionism and developed his own brand of New Realism—a style soon to be called Pop Art. His early training as a sign painter emerged in continued use of

advertising imagery, commercial colors, and the large scale of his work. In 1962, he had his first solo exhibition at the Green Gallery in New York. He was later included in a number of groundbreaking group exhibitions that established Pop art as a movement.

Rosenquist has received numerous honors: he was selected as the Art in America Young Talent Painter in 1963, appointed to a six-year term on the Board of the National Council on the Arts in 1978, nominated as a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1987, named recipient of the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement in 1988, and awarded the Chevalier l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture in 1992. In 2002, he received the Fundación Cristóbal Gabarrón annual international award for art in recognition of his contributions to universal culture. Since his first early career retrospectives in 1972, organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, he has been the subject of gallery and museum exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad. A 40-year retrospective of his work was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York in 2003 and traveled to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in 2004. He continues to produce large-scale commissions, including the recent three-painting suite *The Swimmer in the Econo-mist* (1997-98) for Deutsche Guggenheim, and has a painting planned for the ceiling of the Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Lorie Mertes was promoted to Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator at the Miami Art Museum in 2004. She has been with MAM as a curator since 1994. Mertes has served as the curator of more than 20 exhibitions including *marking time: moving images*, and solo exhibitions by Shahzia Sikander, Russell Crotty, Jim Hodges, and Liisa Roberts as well as a number of special projects including a site-specific installation by Ann Hamilton in 1998 and the recent Miami skywriting project by Vik Muniz. She has also served as the coordinating curator on 20 large-scale traveling exhibitions for MAM. She currently serves as the editor of *Converge*, MAM's publication series documenting *New Work* exhibitions and has participated in the implementation of several education and audience development initiatives including Visitors Gallery, JAM at MAM and the museum's website. Mertes, a Florida native, graduated from the University of Florida with a BA in art history.

## Related Publications and Programs

### Gallery Notes

This illustrated, 16-page, four-color take-home brochure provides background information on James Rosenquist's work and an in-depth examination of the exhibition. Texts by MAM Assistant Director for Special Projects/Curator Lorie Mertes and Sarah Bancroft, co-curator of *James Rosenquist Retrospective* held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of Art, New York 2003. Available in the galleries. Free.

### Opening Reception

**Thursday, March 2, 2006**

6 to 8pm

DJ, hors d'oeuvres, donation bar

**MAM Members free. Non-members \$10**

(does not include admission to the lecture)

**Illustrated talk by James Rosenquist**

6:30 to 7pm

**Admission to the lecture \$5**

Limited seating. Reservations strongly recommended.

Call 305.375.1704 or e-mail [MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov](mailto:MAMRSVP@miamidade.gov)

**Sundays are Free at MAM**

**12 – 5pm**

Guided tours of the exhibition every Sunday at 2pm

Sponsored by *The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald*

**Second Saturdays are Free for Families**

Second Saturday of every month, 1 – 4pm

Drop in to enjoy fun, interactive programs. Families of all ages explore MAM together, find inspiration to create works of art, and participate in hands-on activities led by Gallery Teachers.

Saturday June 10

**Create-a-Comic**

Discover the art of James Rosenquist in the galleries, then join MAM's Gallery Teachers for the hands-on workshop, where images from the comics collide with ads to make art!

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[miamiartmuseum.org](http://miamiartmuseum.org)

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\$5 at 50 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave  
between Flagler St and NW 1<sup>st</sup> St